

FEBRUARY 27, 2023

TESTIMONY OF BRIAN PAGANINI, VICE PRESIDENT AND MANAGING DIRECTOR
QUANTUM BIOPOWER, LLC
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 6664: AA MANAGING WASTE AND CREATING A WASTE AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, Vice Chairs Senator Hochadel and Representative Palm, Ranking Members Senator Harding and Representative Callahan, and Members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Brian Paganini and I am Vice President and Managing Director of Quantum Biopower, LLC. I am here today to testify in support of HB 6664 *An Act Managing Waste and Creating a Waste Authority*.

Quantum Biopower is a state-of-the-art food waste-only anaerobic digester in Connecticut. Quantum manages approximately 40,000 tons of food waste per year, producing 1 megawatt of renewable electricity, fertilizer, mulches and soil amendments. Today, Quantum is capable of receiving packaged foods, separating the food from packaging, and diverting tons of cardboard, glass, aluminum and other packaging materials to be recycled.

Since the facility began operations in 2016, we've had a growing stream of food waste coming in through our campus gates. However, seven years later and only about fifteen percent of the food waste entering the Quantum campus originates in the State of Connecticut. It turns out, as challenging as our original permitting process was, the State's ability to implement effective programs for separating food waste from mixed trash is turning out to be even more challenging. I see HB 6664 as the first important step to get widespread food waste diversion programs up and running, while sending an important market signal that says Connecticut is prioritizing organics recycling and diversion programs.

Section three of the bill would allow new and existing regional or municipal waste authorities to contract with facilities like Quantum, forming a more direct relationship with the facility. Securing incoming waste is the largest hurdle for financing facilities like Quantum. Commitments like these ensure that the waste generator and the receiving facility have the necessary "skin in the game" to ensure diversion program success. Given the small size of Connecticut and defunct County planning structure, waste authorities are a good idea to achieve quantities of scale necessary to leverage purchasing power for various waste disposal services.

Sections four through six and nine, enable municipalities to designate food waste as recyclable and support pick up, transport and drop off areas for collection of food waste. All of these “technical” sections will provide the necessary baseline conditions for waste authorities to establish and grow their food waste diversion programs.

Section nine of the bill is more controversial. It calls for a \$5 per ton assessment on solid waste that is mixed, and therefore destined to go to a landfill or waste to energy facility. No one wants to see fees increase for consumers. The problem remains however, that the municipalities will need resources to support the infrastructure needed to collect food waste on behalf of its residents. Alternatively, other dollars that incentivize regionalized approaches, and advanced waste recovery and energy technologies should be leveraged, such as via the opportunities within the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, perhaps in conjunction with some moderate level of Solid Waste Assessment fee adjustment.

The goal at the end of the day is a payoff in lower tip fees for a significant portion of the waste stream, better operation of new and existing waste to energy facilities and more efficient trucking operations. We know from case studies throughout the world, that once organics are removed from the waste stream, advanced infrastructure to manage post recycled MSW takes shape, further creating a domestic system that is more resistant to uncertain future market conditions.

Connecticut must recognize that, in order to achieve an end savings and a more sustainable system, up front investments will be needed. At the same time, recognize that once this body and the municipalities make a serious commitment to divert food waste, private capital will take Connecticut more seriously. New partners with services will flock to the State and invest in the system and its residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my comments to you today. I am happy to further discuss how we can work together to reinvest in Connecticut’s materials management system for generations to come.